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NOTE ON EAST TIMOR

1. Following the Portuguese coup of April 1974 three political parties emerged in East Timor each with a different view of the territory's future: the Uniao Democratica de Timor (UDT) favoured the adoption of democratic freedoms coupled to a continuation of the Portuguese presence; the Frente Revolucionaria de Timor Leste Independente (FRETILIN), whose origins lay in a failed anti-Portuguese liberation movement, wanted total independence after a brief transitional period; and the Associaco Popular Democratica de Timor (APODETI) advocated integration with Indonesia largely because it regarded the territory as unviable alone. The UDT eventually supported independence after the collapse of General Spinola's dream of a federation of Portuguese speaking peoples. UDT was probably the most influential of the three groups at the outset but its association with the old order and initial reluctance over independence meant that many supporters turned their allegiance to FRETILIN which, by early 1975, was generally considered to have become the largest party. FRETILIN's aims were considered by some as left wing "revolutionary" and others as "reformist"; its domestic aims were to improve the lot of the ordinary Timorese and its external policy was non-aligned. APODETI remained the smallest of the three main groups. Three further small parties were formed but were of minimal significance.

2. In November 1974 a new Governor arrived and established an Advisory Government Council to include the three main parties but first APODETI and then FRETILIN refused to participate. In January 1975 UDT and FRETILIN joined forces to press for independence at a time when Indonesia was already unhappy with events in East Timor, depicting them as increasingly chaotic and communist influenced. In May Portugal began talks with the three main parties on decolonization. Both FRETILIN and APODETI boycotted the talks at various points but a measure of agreement was reached and the Portuguese promulgated a Transitional Government to prepare for the election of a Popular Assembly in October 1976. FRETILIN, however, stepped up its own political activity and, on 11 August 1975, UDT seized key installations in Dili and demanded immediate independence and the detention of FRETILIN leaders. The Portuguese rejected these demands and called for talks but fighting broke out. The Portuguese failed to intervene as their local forces disintegrated with most troops joining FRETILIN. During August and September FRETILIN gradually gained the upper hand establishing its own administration in the territory. Casualty figures vary between 3,000 and 60,000 according to the source. The Portuguese continued to press for talks but political problems in Lisbon increased their difficulties. Portugal and Indonesia agreed that East Timor was a Portuguese problem. On 28 November FRETILIN declared independence unilaterally and UDT and APODETI responded with calls for integration with Indonesia. The Portuguese rejected both and tried to reestablish their authority but on 7 December 1975 Indonesian troops invaded the territory. It is difficult to assess subsequent events as the territory was closed to outside observers but in May the Indonesians claimed a Popular Representative Assembly had accepted integration and East Timor received provincial status on 17 July 1976.

3. At the UN the Indonesian intervention was deplored by an unanimous Security Council Resolution 384 of 22 December 1975: this also called upon all states to respect the territorial integrity of East Timor as well as the inalienable right of its people to self-determination and on the Government of Indonesia to withdraw all its forces without delay, besides requesting the UN Secretary-General to send a special representative to the territory. This was followed up by a further resolution on 22 April 1976 (SCR 389) which by 12 votes including the United Kingdom - 0 - 2 (United States, Japan) reiterated the main points made in SCR 384.

4. Indonesian annexation was subsequently discussed in the UN General Assembly which passed UNGA 31/53 on 1/12/76 by 68 for - 20 against - 49 abstentions including the United Kingdom. This reaffirmed the Security Council Resolutions and rejected the claim that East Timor had been integrated into Indonesia, inasmuch as the people of the Territory had not been able to exercise freely their right of self-determination and independence. In the debate there was sharp criticism of Indonesian non-compliance with the Security Council resolutions. There have been no General Assembly resolutions on East Timor since GAR 37/30 of 1982 which by 50 - 46 - 50 (United Kingdom) requested the Secretary-General to initiate consultations with all parties directly concerned, with a view to exploring avenues for achieving a comprehensive settlement of the problem. Subsequent contacts between Indonesia and Portugal in New York resulted in useful progress being made on a number of subsidiary issues: the 'repatriation' to Portugal of a number of employees of the colonial administration; family visits; pension payments. Agreement has also been reached in principle by both Portugal and Indonesia for a visit by a Portugese Parliamentary delegation to East Timor, but obstacles continue to emerge to the visit actually taking place.

5. The United Kingdom voted for the UN Security Council resolutions in 1975 and 1976 deploring the intervention. The majority of members of the European Community, including the United Kingdom, decided to abstain on UN resolutions passed in subsequent debates in the UN General Assembly. We took the view that by so doing, in the company of a growing number of other countries, we could help both the process of reconciliation and the search for a diplomatic solution between Indonesia and Portugal. We welcomed the renewed initiative of the UN Secretary-General in response to UNGA Resolution 37/30 of 1982 to promote contacts between the two Governments designed to achieve a just settlement. At the 44th session of the Commission on Human Rights in March 1988 our delegate said, "The United Kingdom Government has since 1982 supported the efforts of the Secretary-General to encourage a bilateral settlement between Portugal and Indonesia on the issue of East Timor. We hope that both sides will work actively at the problem with a view to reaching early agreement. We are sure that both parties will be concerned to find a settlement which fully protects the interests of the people of East Timor." The Twelve have subsequently made similar statements at the Human Rights Commission and in the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly. East Timor is also discussed (most recently in February 1991 A/AC.109/PV.1377) in the Special Committee on the Situation with Regard to the

Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples when the Indonesian representative maintained that the people of East Timor had exercised their right of self-determination 15 years ago.

6. Reports suggest that conditions, including human rights, have improved and that the level of conflict is much diminished . There have been more visitors in recent years (including members of the British Embassy). In January 1989 the territory was "opened up", which made travel within East Timor by foreigners easier, although some restrictions on movement remain for the East Timorese. The record of improvement was set back by arrrests and detentions before President Soeharto's visit in November 1988, during and after the Pope's visit there in October 1989, and during the US Ambassador's visit in January 1990 and on several other occasions since then. The Indonesians have been made aware of UK and EC concerns.

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